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New legislation stiffens penalties for leaving the scene of a firearms accident

LANSING – Firearms users whose guns discharge accidentally and injure someone else would be forbidden from leaving the scene of the accident under legislation introduced Thursday in the Michigan Senate, announced Sens. Michelle McManus and Tony Stamas.

Senate Bill 524, sponsored by McManus, would make it a crime to flee the scene of an accident involving a firearm. Under the bill, a person who knowingly left the scene of a firearms accident where someone had been injured or killed without both offering aid and reporting the incident would be guilty of either a misdemeanor or felony, depending on the severity of the injuries they caused.

"As an avid outdoorswoman, I have a keen understanding and respect for the power of a firearm," said McManus, R-Lake Leelanau. "Using firearms means taking responsibility for the potential problems that can result, and the law should reflect that."

Senate Bill 523, sponsored by Stamas, would establish punishments for the crime. Under the bill, the person responsible would be guilty of a misdemeanor and face up to a year in prison and a fine of \$1,000. If the accident caused serious injuries or death, the crime would be a felony, and punishments would include up to 15 years imprisonment and up to \$10,000 in fines.

"When owning a gun, there is a fundamental expectation of practicing safety and responsibility," said Stamas, R-Midland. "Those who fail to take responsibility when they are at fault of an accident need to be held accountable."

The bills were referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.